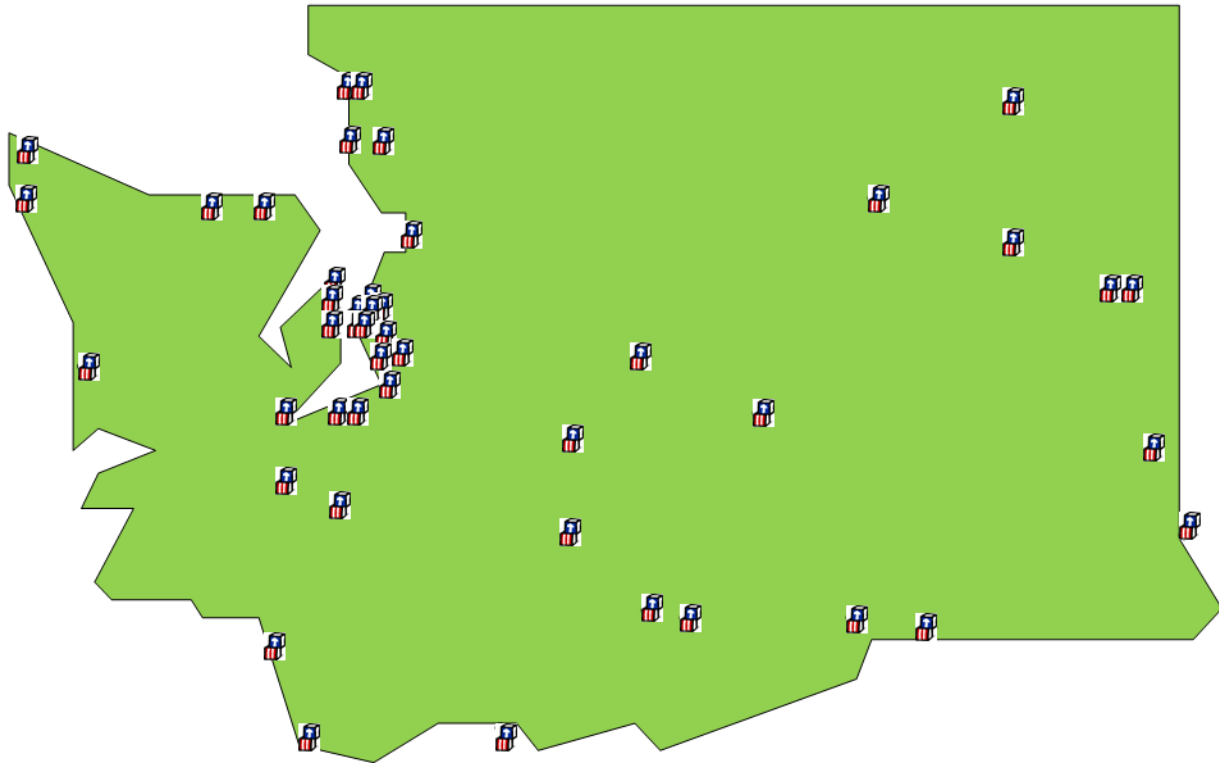


**Washington State  
Head Start State Collaboration Office  
Strategic Plan  
2009-2013**



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## **Table of Contents**

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>HSSCO and Early Learning in Washington State: Current Context</b>	<b>4-5</b>
<b>HSSCO in Washington: Past Performance and Progress</b>	<b>5-6</b>
<b>Identifying the Needs of Washington Head Start and Early Head Start programs</b>	<b>6-9</b>
<b>HSSCO Goals, Objectives, and Strategies: 2009-2013</b>	<b>9-20</b>
<b>APPENDIX A: HSSCO Strategic Planning Team Advisory Team Members</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>APPENDIX B: HSSCO Needs Assessment: State of Washington 2008-09 Survey Results</b>	<b>22-32</b>

## Introduction

The purpose, objectives, and initiatives of the Head Start State Collaboration Office (HSSCO) exist within a diverse and ever-changing national, regional, state and local context. This involves a number of new and existing regulations and priorities that require constant adaptation and dedicated collaborative efforts. With an abundance of new requirements outlined in the Head Start Act of 2007 and a sobering national and state economic forecast, it is more pivotal than ever for the HSSCO to serve a vital role in facilitating collaborative opportunities and fostering new partnerships to build a sustainable, comprehensive early learning system for our children, families and communities.

In the Head Start Act of 2007 (P.L. 110-134), the HSSCO in each state is charged with implementing an annual statewide needs assessment of Head Start programs to determine the specific needs of programs and to develop a strategic plan based on the results of the assessment. In Washington State, a needs assessment survey was implemented with Head Start/ Early Head Start programs in October 2008 as the primary mechanism for gathering data with regard to their needs related to the nine (9) HSSCO priority areas, which include: *Health Services; Children and Families Experiencing Homelessness; Family/Child Assistance; Child Care; Family Literacy; Children with Disabilities; Community Services; Education (Publicly-funded Pre-K Partnership Development and Head Start Transition and Alignment with K-12); and Professional Development.*

The results of the 2008 assessment, in addition to feedback gathered through a survey completed by external partners, informed the development of this strategic plan that will serve to guide the efforts of the HSSCO in Washington State over the next five years. It is important to mention that while the new federal requirement and subsequent strategic plan development are aiming to advance the most current needs of Head Start/Early Head Start programs and all low-income children and families in Washington, the plan will also continue to build, where appropriate, on the existing federal HSSCO grant that concludes in 2011.

The plan, designed for the HSSCO to take a leadership role in facilitating essential partnerships and collaborative opportunities to meet the specific needs of Head Start/Early Head Start programs in the state, also positions the HSSCO to continue to maintain critical partnerships with statewide public and private entities alike, and to persist in contributing valuable efforts toward the development of a comprehensive early learning system for all Washingtonians.

### **The HSSCO and Early Learning in Washington State: Current Context**

In Washington State, the HSSCO is located in an executive branch agency, the Department of Early Learning, which serves as a central mechanism for bringing visibility, focus, and a streamlined effort to early learning infrastructure, funding, and leadership throughout the state. Along with two of its primary partners, Thrive by Five Washington (a public/private partnership), and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), DEL has made significant efforts to build a sustainable state-level partnership and shared strategies for advancing early learning priorities in the state. Among key strategies outlined in this formal partnership are a statewide kindergarten assessment process, the alignment of data systems, a pilot project for assessing elements of a Quality Rating and Improvement System, the creation of a professional development system, and multiple efforts to create a “Culture of Literacy” in Washington State. These joint efforts require the support of numerous partners and communities across the state, and many of them are also driven by legislative authority.

Additionally, the legislature created an Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC), to advise DEL on early learning issues and to work in conjunction with the department to build a statewide, comprehensive early learning system. As a result, DEL, ELAC and the greater early learning community have recently embarked on a path to develop Washington’s first statewide, comprehensive early learning plan. Building on the work of *Kids Matter*, the state’s Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) framework, Washington is making great strides in creating a plan that is whole-child focused, incorporates families as a central element, and infuses cultural awareness and diversity as key foundational components.

The HSSCO has continued to play a key role in the development of the statewide early learning plan, which integrates many of the state’s existing activities and efforts into the plan, such as the work of the DEL Professional Development Consortium, a group charged with the task of designing a statewide professional development system. The HSSCO serves to support key aspects of the early learning plan development process as well as the engagement of multiple partners and stakeholders—including the Head Start/Early Head Start community—in various workgroups and associated activities.

In addition to the state’s enthusiastic focus on the development of the statewide early learning plan, a number of other innovative activities and initiatives are currently in motion and will serve well to compliment the overall direction of the statewide plan. In the area of oral health, for example, Washington was selected as one of six pilot states in the nation to implement the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD) Head Start Dental Home Initiative, which is designed to increase access to oral health care for all Head Start children. The state Department of Health was awarded one of a few Project LAUNCH grants in the nation from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to improve the social/emotional and mental health of young children 0-8. The Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) initiative continues to support state, local, and regional efforts to build strong and sustainable early learning systems through the guidance of our statewide framework, *Kids Matter*. Another highly invaluable effort has been realized through Washington’s Council for Children and Families as they have continued to integrate the nationally-known

Strengthening Families framework into a number of successful strength-based approaches for building the social and emotional competencies of children, families and communities.

Overall, there is a highly dedicated group of partners and stakeholders supporting the state's efforts to create a comprehensive, coordinated early learning system. Despite the current economic environment and the rapid change in the field, early learning continues to garner public interest and support in Washington. This support is helping to make great strides in building a system designed to improve outcomes for children and families.

### **The HSSCO: Past Performance and Progress**

Concurrent with the constantly changing early learning environment (nationally and within the state) and the emerging development of a statewide early learning plan for Washington, the HSSCO has continued to serve as a leader and catalyst in facilitating the development of multi-agency and public/private partnerships across the state. Over the last decade there have been two significant changes to the HSSCO in Washington State. The first was a structural move from the Office of the Governor, Family Policy Council to the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), Division of Child Care and Early Learning (DCCEL) in June 2001; the second was a transition from DSHS to the Department of Early Learning upon its establishment in 2006. Despite these major transitions, the HSSCO has continued to prosper and accomplish a number of goals and objectives in recent years, playing a significant role in developing and supporting initiatives that improve opportunities and outcomes for children and families in Washington State and ensuring Head Start/Early Head Start remain key players in the process. A few initiatives/activities of the HSSCO in recent years include:

- **Statewide Needs Assessment of Head Start programs**
- **DEL Methamphetamine Summit 2008** (development and facilitation)
- **Department of Social and Health Services Data Share Agreements for Head Start programs**
- **Collaborative Leadership Institute** (development, steering committee member, funding)
- **Head Start/AAPD Dental Home Initiative** (leadership team member, planning and development)
- **Serving Homeless Children and Families Partnership** (DSHS/DEL/OSPI)
- **University of Washington Head Start Center for Inclusion Advisory Board member**
- **Culture of Literacy Task Force** (member)
- **Supporting efforts to develop a comprehensive Professional Development System in Washington** (DEL Professional Development Consortium, Head Start Higher Education Roundtable, Washington State University Head Start Higher Education Project, etc.)
- **Partnerships with Multiple Organizations/Entities** (i.e., Department of Social and Health Services, Department of Health, Foundation for Early Learning, Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems/Kids Matter, Council for Children and Families, OSPI, Washington State University, Washington State Association for Head Start and ECEAP, RX Office of Head Start, Thrive by Five Washington, Educational Service Districts,
- **Supporting, through resources and funding, the development of community-based early learning coalitions**

Collectively,, these activities/initiatives illustrate the significant impact that the HSSCO can have in building early childhood systems around specific early childhood groups and initiatives. The HSSCO continues to actively and effectively engage in activities that build systems, encourage collaboration and facilitate the involvement of Head Start and Early Head Start in state policies and plans. Further, by focusing its efforts on key systems building strategies, especially those reflecting the HSSCO and *Kids Matter* priority areas, the HSSCO is poised to make substantial contributions, not only in meeting the needs of Head Start/Early Head Start programs, but also to the future development of Washington's statewide early learning plan.

### **Identifying the Needs of Washington Head Start and Early Head Start programs**

In Washington, there are four different Head Start program options that meet the diverse needs of children and families in our state: Head Start, Early Head Start, Migrant/Seasonal Head Start, and American Indian/Alaska Native Head Start. The programs are geographically diverse, representing both rural and urban settings.

**Head Start:** In 2008, nearly 12,000 children were served in 28 Head Start programs around the state.

**Early Head Start:** In 2008, nearly 2,800 pregnant mothers and children were served in 20 programs around the state.

**Migrant/Seasonal Head Start:** In 2008, Migrant and Seasonal Head Start served approximately 3,200 children and their families in Washington. The Washington State Migrant Council and Enterprise for Progress in the Community (EPIC) operate the only two Migrant/Seasonal Head Start programs in Washington.

**American Indian/Tribal Head Start:** In 2008, American Indian/Tribal Head Start served nearly 1,300 children and their families in 17 programs across the state.

Head Start programs in Washington represent a diverse and innovative team of staff, parents, and community partners, as demonstrated through their significant efforts to provide quality services to children and families in their communities. To successfully implement a comprehensive service model in their communities, Head Start programs in the state have initiated a number of exceptional partnerships with school districts, the state Pre-K program (ECEAP), community action agencies, health providers and organizations, community service organizations, state government agencies and a host of other entities.

In addition to the many successful partnerships cultivated within their communities at the Head Start program level, the HSSCO was established to serve as a state-level support mechanism for the various efforts of programs to provide quality, comprehensive services to children and families. Specifically, the HSSCO is charged with the following three federally-mandated goal areas in its efforts to support Washington programs:

- ***Help build early childhood systems and enhance access to comprehensive services and support for Head Start programs and all low-income children and families;***

- *Encourage widespread collaboration between Head Start and other appropriate programs, services, and initiatives, augmenting Head Start's capacity to be a partner in State initiatives on behalf of children and their families; and*
- *Facilitate the involvement of Head Start in state policies, plans, processes and decisions affecting Head Start target populations and other low-income families.*

In addition to the three overarching goal areas, the HSSCO must focus its efforts on nine (9) HSSCO priority areas that include: ***Health Services; Children and Families Experiencing Homelessness; Family/Child Assistance; Child Care; Family Literacy; Children with Disabilities; Community Services; Education (Publicly-funded Pre-K Partnership Development and Head Start Transition and Alignment with K-12); and Professional Development.***

In 2007, P.L. 110-134 (the Head Start Act of 2007) specifically charged the HSSCO in each state to conduct a statewide needs assessment of Head Start programs and use the results to inform the development of a strategic plan. In addition, the HSSCO is required through the Act to produce a report to the public on the results of the needs assessment.

In Washington, the HSSCO worked closely with an internal and external advisory team (including representatives from Head Start programs, the Washington State Association of Head Start and ECEAP (WSA), and the AI/AN and Migrant/Seasonal Collaboration Offices) to guide the development of the needs assessment process, which was released to programs in the form of Survey Monkey in October 2008. Due to the Governor's state spending freeze on personal services contracts announced in August 2008, the HSSCO was unable to expend federal funds specifically allocated for contractual services to support the needs assessment process; therefore, internal resources and expertise were sought to support activities necessary to execute the work. Following the collection of data from programs, the HSSCO engaged an advisory team of key partners (see Appendix A for a list of advisory team members) and internal staff to analyze and identify overall trends and key priority areas that served to guide major aspects in the development of this strategic plan. The following outlines the key trends from the assessment results (see Appendix B for the HSSCO Needs Assessment Report to the Public for a more detailed version of the assessment process and results), followed by significant comments by the advisory team members on the future direction of the HSSCO Strategic Plan:

#### **Summary of Strengths Identified in the Needs Assessment:**

- Partnering with oral health professionals on oral health-related issues
- Partnerships and collaboration with medical/dental community
- Multiple resources/grants available to access in supporting family/child literacy activities
- Partnerships with school districts to prepare transition plans and align curriculum/assessment
- Programs who operate Head Start and ECEAP (dually funded) report strong partnerships with DEL and school districts
- Most programs have strong partnerships with two-year higher education institutions
- Programs report strong partnerships with law enforcement agencies and child abuse/neglect service agencies

- Programs report high levels of coordination and collaboration with the Department of Social and Health Services

**Summary of Barriers/Needs Identified in the Needs Assessment:**

- Limited mental health services
- Lack of medical and dental coverage for parents of the families
- A number of programs reporting “no working relationship” with the local McKinney-Vento liaison
- Difficulty obtaining sufficient data on needs of homeless children and families
- Difficulty developing family outreach, supports and transition planning with the local school districts
- Need to establish partnerships with child care providers
- Lack of access to full-day, full-year services for families
- Barriers to maintaining child care subsidies
- Lack of alignment of educational activities, curricular objectives, and instruction with school districts
- Need to strengthen school district relationships (primarily around disabilities services)
- Need to strengthen transition plans among school districts and Head Start programs
- In accessing professional development opportunities, programs cited “lack of staff release time” and “financial support” as the two primary barriers in meeting Head Start teacher qualifications
- Lack of involvement with or awareness of state-level organizations and task forces (i.e., Council for Children and Families, Incarcerated Parents Task Force, etc.)

**Advisory Team Messages Regarding Focus Areas for the Strategic Plan:**

- Focus on health care (lead screening, oral health and mental health)
- Focus on health insurance coverage for adults in families
- Focus on strengthening systems for supporting homeless children and families
- Focus on strategies for improving relationships between Head Start and Child Care
- Focus on strategies to improve the child care subsidy system in Washington
- Focus on strategies to enhance relationships with school districts with regard to curriculum/assessment alignment and transitions
- Focus on increasing Head Start involvement in and knowledge of state-level initiatives and efforts
- Focus on strategies to support immigrant families (i.e., deportation issues, etc.)
- Create more regular and effective method for the HSSCO to communicate with Head Start programs
- Continue to increase the autonomy and visibility of the HSSCO in order to meet programs’ needs

The trends identified above and the feedback provided by the Head Start Strategic Planning Advisory Team was instrumental in the design of the plan. Advisory Team members not only provided broad-level feedback regarding the overall direction of the plan, but also supported the HSSCO in identifying specific strategies to accomplish the goals of the plan. In addition to the feedback provided by the



Advisory Team, the HSSCO released a survey to a variety of external partners to collect their thoughts about the future direction of the HSSCO with regard to state-level systems building efforts and the Head Start (HSSCO) priority areas. Overall, external partners voiced the following with regard to those priority areas they feel are most critical for the HSSCO to focus on over the next five years (listed in order of priority according to survey results):

- Education/K-12 Alignment
- Professional Development
- Health Services
- Child Care
- Services for Children with Disabilities
- Services to Homeless Children and Families
- Family Literacy
- Family/Child Assistance
- Community Services

#### **Washington State HSSCO Strategic Plan 2009-2013: Goals, Objectives and Strategies**

Based on the statewide needs assessment results and subsequent feedback from the strategic planning advisory team and external partners, the HSSCO has outlined a strategic plan to include goals, objectives, and strategies for the next five years that support the federally-mandated goals and priority areas outlined in the Head Start Act of 2007. In addition, the goals, objectives and strategies have been intentionally aligned with the domain areas within the ECCS/Kids Matter framework (*Access to Health; Social, Emotional, and Mental Health; Parenting Information and Support; and Early Care and Education*) in an effort to ensure that the work of the HSSCO is evolving with and supporting the development of the statewide early learning plan and other existing community-based efforts. Finally, it is important to reiterate that although this strategic plan is aiming to advance the most current needs of Head Start/Early Head Start programs and all low-income children and families in Washington, it will also continue to build, where appropriate, on the existing federal HSSCO grant that concludes in 2011.

The five overarching strategic plan goal areas for 2009-2013 are:

- **Goal #1: Increase the availability of appropriate and coordinated health services for children and families**
- **Goal #2: Improved ability of families to obtain quality early learning programs and services that meet their needs**
- **Goal #3: Improve/increase opportunities for Head Start/Early Head Start programs to be involved in state-level activities, initiatives and programs that enhance services to children and families**
- **Goal #4: Contribute to the development of a coordinated, statewide comprehensive professional development system for all early learning professionals in Washington State**
- **Goal #5: Improve the governance, functional operations, and perceptions of the HSSCO to be a transparent and inclusive leader in supporting policies and initiatives that further advance services to children and families**

As the goals, objectives and strategies of this plan are set in motion, it is important to keep in mind that the early learning landscape may be altered by changes and actions of the legislature during the timeframe in which this plan exists. Each year, the legislative session usually dominates activities through April, making it difficult to convene groups and outline a specific timeline for activities listed. In addition, the annual needs assessment of Head Start programs in the state may inform and/or require necessary modifications or additions to the plan to meet the immediate needs of programs. The following tables outline the proposed strategic plan for the next five years.

**Goal #1: Increase the availability of appropriate and coordinated health services for children and families.**

Objective	Strategy	HSSCO Mandated Goal Area(s)	HSSCO Priority Area(s)	ECCS/Kids Matter Domain Area
Develop state and local-level partnerships that assist Head Start programs in ensuring appropriate and timely lead screenings for all children in compliance with Head Start Program Performance Standards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Convene a state-level workgroup to address current barriers to lead screening completion in Washington State (to include the WA Dept. of Health (DOH), practitioners, public health offices, AAP, etc.)</li> <li>Support programs in coordinating with state and local entities to facilitate the completion of lead screenings.</li> </ul>	#2, 3	Health Care	Access to Health
Increase access to dental homes for young children and their families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to serve on the Leadership Team for the Head Start AAPD Dental Home Initiative in Washington.</li> <li>Continue to work in collaboration with DOH in the development and implementation of the state oral health plan.</li> </ul>	#1	Health Care	Access to Health
Promote and increase awareness of the importance of oral health for early learning professionals, children and families through a variety of oral health education opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to work with various partners in oral health (i.e., Washington Dental Service Foundation, DOH, etc.) to provide a variety of oral health education opportunities and create awareness of oral health issues.</li> </ul>	#1	Health Care	Access to Health
Promote health literacy as a critical component to the ongoing health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish coordination efforts among providers to continually support health</li> </ul>	#1	Health Care	Access to Health

Objective	Strategy	HSSCO Mandated Goal Area(s)	HSSCO Priority Area(s)	ECCS/Kids Matter Domain Area
and well-being of children.	literacy messages <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support ongoing efforts to promote the Johnson and Johnson Health Literacy project in Head Start programs in Washington</li> </ul>			
Promote collaboration among policymakers, teachers/providers and other stakeholders around the social, emotional and mental health of young children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to provide funding and support to the Strengthening Families Washington initiative and associated activities (i.e., Community Café, etc.)</li> <li>Promote the integration of the Strengthening Families protective factor model in multiple state-level systems, activities and initiatives</li> <li>Provide opportunities for Head Start/Early Head Start programs to become involved in the Strengthening Families Washington Initiative</li> <li>Support programs and curricula that are proven to enhance teachers and caregivers' knowledge of social, emotional and mental health of young children</li> <li>Support and promote assessment strategies that include social, emotional and mental health components and that outcomes are measured, reported and used as a tool for improvement</li> <li>Facilitate Head Start/Early Head Start's involvement in the ongoing activities of the Washington State Mental Health Transformation Project</li> </ul>	All	Health Care	Social, Emotional, and Mental Health; Parenting Information and Support; Access to Health
Support Head Start/Early Head Start programs in helping parents to obtain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitate a data collection process in partnership with Head Start/Early Head Start programs related to parent</li> </ul>	All	Health Care; Family/Child Assistance	Parenting Information and Support; Access to Health

Objective	Strategy	HSSCO Mandated Goal Area(s)	HSSCO Priority Area(s)	ECES/Kids Matter Domain Area
health insurance	health insurance coverage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Convene a workgroup to discuss and identify strategies for supporting parents in accessing health insurance</li> </ul>			

**Goal #2: Improved ability of families to obtain quality early learning programs and services that meet their needs.**

Objective	Strategy	HSSCO Mandated Goal Area(s)	HSSCO Priority Area(s)	ECES/Kids Matter Domain Area(s)
Establish sustainable partnerships with school district McKinney-Vento liaisons at the state and local levels to improve coordinated services to homeless children and families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to partner and coordinate joint activities with the OSPI Statewide McKinney-Vento Coordinator that facilitate learning and collaboration among school districts, Head Start/Early Head Start, and other early learning programs</li> <li>Develop a directory of key community contacts throughout the state for serving homeless children and families (to include school district McKinney-Vento liaisons, WA Coalition for the Homeless, CTED, etc.)</li> <li>Partner with the WA State Association of Head Start and ECEAP to convene a networking session and expert speaker (i.e., Barbara Duffield) on serving homeless children and families</li> <li>Provide Head Start/Early Head Start programs with updated information and resources regarding the federal McKinney-Vento Act</li> </ul>	#2,3	Services to Homeless Children and Families	Parenting Information and Support
Improve coordination and policy development between Head Start/Early Head	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support working partnerships (planning, problem solving and joint decision-making) between local HS/EHS programs and their local education agencies</li> </ul>	#2, 3	Services to Children with Disabilities; Education/K-12 Alignment	Early Care and Education

Objective	Strategy	HSSCO Mandated Goal Area(s)	HSSCO Priority Area(s)	ECCS/Kids Matter Domain Area(s)
Start programs and the K-12 System (local education agencies, OSPI) for the purpose of supporting services to children with disabilities	<p>on the topic of IDEA, Part B and Part C Special Education and transition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a working partnership <i>Memorandum of Agreement</i> (shared vision, scope of collaborative activities, identify legal and programmatic needs and barriers) between OSPI, DSHS, the Head Start Association, Head Start-State Collaboration Office, the RX T/TA Network, and the Region X Office of Head Start that focuses on IDEA, Part B and Part C Special Education and Transitions</li> <li>Promote the ability of families to be actively and effectively involved (community approach) in planning for transitions among environments</li> <li>Support staff development and skills needed for transition activities between agencies/systems</li> </ul>			
Improve coordination and policy development between Head Start/Early Head Start programs and the Department of Early Learning to provide improved child care access for children and families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Serve as a liaison between Head Start/Early Head Start programs and the State Child Care Administrator (and related staff) to continually discuss options and actions for improving the child care subsidy system.</li> <li>Conduct research on other states' child care subsidy policies and strategies to contribute to Washington's discussions about the issues.</li> </ul>	#2, 3	Child Care	Early Care and Education
Facilitate partnerships between Head Start/Early Head Start programs and the K-12 system for the purpose of improving the alignment of curriculum and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work in partnership with the Director of Early Learning at OSPI and other key early learning leaders to convene workgroups and facilitate conversations between K-12 personnel and Head Start/Early Head Start programs (i.e., on issues</li> </ul>	#2	Education/K-12 Alignment	Early Care and Education

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Strategy</b>	<b>HSSCO Mandated Goal Area(s)</b>	<b>HSSCO Priority Area(s)</b>	<b>ECCS/Kids Matter Domain Area(s)</b>
assessment practices and data collection	<p>relating to alignment of curriculum and assessment practices, data collection, etc.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate information sharing with OSPI regarding Head Start/Early Head Start curriculum/assessment requirements (i.e., Head Start Child Outcomes Framework, components outlined in the Head Start Act of 2007, etc.)</li> </ul>			
Promote and increase innovative Head Start-Child Care collaborative models that meet the changing needs of children and families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convene, facilitate and support a working partnership group (planning, problem solving and joint decision-making) between HS/EHS and Child Care</li> <li>• Provide opportunities for Head Start/Early Head Start programs to learn about and collaborate with a variety of child care-related organizations (Child Care Resource and Referral; WAEYC, SEIU; etc.)</li> <li>• Share and promote innovative Head Start-Child Care collaborative models from other states</li> </ul>	#2	Child Care	Early Care and Education
Promote coordination opportunities with appropriate government entities regarding issues that impact immigrant families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convene conversations and dialogue with appropriate entities regarding deportation of immigrant families and its impact on children in Head Start/Early Head Start programs</li> </ul>	#2, 3	All	Parenting Information and Support
Strengthen networks between Head Start/Early Head Start and programs serving children in foster care and children of incarcerated parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote partnerships and opportunities for collaboration between the Department of Social and Health Services and Head Start/Early Head Start programs</li> <li>• In partnership with the Washington State Association of Head Start and ECEAP, convene a state-level advisory</li> </ul>	#2, 3	Family/Child Assistance	Parenting Information and Support

Objective	Strategy	HSSCO Mandated Goal Area(s)	HSSCO Priority Area(s)	ECCS/Kids Matter Domain Area(s)
	team to focus on improving services to children n foster care			

**Goal #3: Improve/increase opportunities for Head Start/Early Head Start programs to be involved in state-level activities, initiatives and programs that enhance services to children and families.**

Objective	Strategy	HSSCO Mandated Goal Area(s)	HSSCO Priority Area(s)	ECCS/Kids Matter Domain Area(s)
Continue to ensure Head Start/Early Head Start's involvement in activities and initiatives of the Department of Early Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicate regularly with Head Start/Early Head Start programs about new and existing DEL activities/initiatives and/or policies and ensure they have opportunities to be involved, where appropriate</li> <li>Continue to collaborate with the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) in coordinating activities and communicating about issues concerning Head Start/Early Head Start and ECEAP programs</li> <li>Provide regular updates to Head Start/Early Head Start programs regarding the Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC) and ensure Head Start/Early Head Start has consistent representation at ELAC meetings</li> </ul>	All	All	All
Ensure Head Start/Early Head Start's involvement in the development of a statewide Kindergarten Assessment process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage Head Start/Early Head Start partners in the workgroup/stakeholder process for developing a kindergarten assessment process</li> <li>Provide mechanisms for</li> </ul>	#2, 3	Education/K-12 Alignment	Early Care and Education

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Strategy</b>	<b>HSSCO Mandated Goal Area(s)</b>	<b>HSSCO Priority Area(s)</b>	<b>ECCS/Kids Matter Domain Area(s)</b>
and the identification of common outcomes for children in Washington	<p>programs to provide feedback to the process in a variety of ways</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide programs with regular updates about the progress/status of the initiative</li> </ul>			
Ensure Head Start/Early Head Start's involvement in the development of Washington's statewide early learning plan and other key systems-building activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to provide leadership to the statewide early learning plan process (i.e., planning, managing workgroups, facilitation, etc.)</li> <li>• Continue to support, through in-kind and funding, activities associated with the Early Learning Plan</li> <li>• Ensure Head Start/Early Head Start participation in various workgroups and activities associated with development and implementation of the plan</li> <li>• Continue to participate in and provide funding/resources to systems-building initiatives that serve to advance implementation of state and local-level systems building activities (i.e., Kids Matter/Strengthening Families Washington, Reach Out and Read Washington, etc.)</li> </ul>	#1	All	All
Increase Head Start/Early Head Start programs' involvement with community service/volunteer-based programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create partnerships with programs such as Americorps, City Year (Seattle-based), etc. to provide Head Start/Early Head Start programs' with the ability to collaborate with volunteer and community-based initiatives to enhance services in programs</li> </ul>	#2	Community Services	All
Ensure Head Start/Early Head Start's involvement in initiatives/activities related to developing policies or programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work in partnership with the RX T/TA Network to facilitate collaboration between Early Head Start programs and other entities in Washington (i.e., DEL, State Fire Marshall,</li> </ul>	All	All	All



Objective	Strategy	HSSCO Mandated Goal Area(s)	HSSCO Priority Area(s)	ECCS/Kids Matter Domain Area(s)
for infants and toddlers	DOH, OSPI, etc.) regarding action plans for addressing programs' needs related to Early Head Start expansion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Involve Head Start/Early Head Start programs in state-level planning regarding infant/toddler initiatives or plans</li> </ul>			

**Goal #4: Contribute to the development of a coordinated, statewide comprehensive professional development system for all early learning professionals in Washington State.**

Objective	Strategy	HSSCO Mandated Goal Area(s)	HSSCO Priority Area(s)	ECCS/Kids Matter Domain Area(s)
Support the establishment of a statewide, comprehensive Professional Development system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to participate as an active member of the DEL Professional Development Consortium</li> <li>Engage Head Start partners in various workgroups and activities associated with the Professional Development Consortium</li> </ul>	#1	Professional Development	All
Support various projects and initiatives that enhance the ability of Head Start/Early Head Start staff in complying with professional development requirements outlined in the Head Start Act of 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to provide funding and other resources to Washington State University in their development of a statewide database to coordinate Head Start/Early Head Start teacher professional development data with institutions of higher education to facilitate an effective, expedient professional development pathway for all staff</li> <li>Promote and advocate for professional development programs and opportunities specific to infant/toddler development</li> </ul>	#1	Professional Development	All

Objective	Strategy	HSSCO Mandated Goal Area(s)	HSSCO Priority Area(s)	ECCS/Kids Matter Domain Area(s)
Improve coordination efforts between the HSSCO, WSA, RX Office of Head Start, ECEAP, and the RX Head Start T/TA network to ensure Head Start/Early Head Start staff have access to appropriate and timely professional development opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to support the coordination and facilitation of regular meetings with the Head Start/ECEAP Partnership for Quality (that includes the HSSCO, WSA, ECEAP, the Office of Head Start, and the RX Head Start T/TA Networks)</li> <li>Participate in joint planning and goal setting with the Head Start/ECEAP Partnership for Quality</li> <li>Support communication to Head Start/Early Head Start and ECEAP programs regarding the status/progress of the Head Start/ECEAP Partnership for Quality</li> </ul>	#1	Professional Development	All
Support the Collaborative Leadership Institute (CLI) in its efforts to build a renewed and lasting network of leaders prepared to advance innovative approaches that benefit children and families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue participation on Collaborative Leadership Institute (CLI) Steering Committee</li> <li>Continue to support, through funding and in-kind resources, the CLI leadership development activities</li> <li>Research and promote innovative practices that will support emerging leaders at multiple levels</li> </ul>	#1	Professional Development	All

**Goal #5: Improve the governance, functional operations, and perceptions of the HSSCO to be a transparent and inclusive leader in supporting policies and initiatives that further advance services to children and families.**

Objective	Strategy	HSSCO Mandated Goal Area(s)	HSSCO Priority Area(s)	ECCS/Kids Matter Domain Area(s)
Develop regular mechanisms for communicating with Head Start programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a quarterly newsletter or web update to send to Head Start/Early Head Start programs related</li> </ul>	All	All	All

Objective	Strategy	HSSCO Mandated Goal Area(s)	HSSCO Priority Area(s)	ECCS/Kids Matter Domain Area(s)
regarding status and progress of statewide activities, initiatives, and events affecting the Head Start population.	<p>to the status and progress of HSSCO activities and initiatives and other statewide activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to participate in Washington State Association of Head Start and ECEAP Director meetings and events as a primary venue for providing updates to Head Start/Early Head Start programs</li> </ul>			
Develop mechanisms for obtaining ongoing feedback from Head Start/Early Head Start programs regarding the effectiveness of the HSSCO and how the HSSCO can best meet their needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct an annual statewide needs assessment of Head Start/Early Head Start programs and use the feedback to inform federal grants, plans, and continuation applications</li> <li>Conduct site visits to Head Start/Early Head Start programs across the state to continually build partnerships with local programs and staff and learn about their specific strengths and needs</li> <li>Continue to work with a Head Start/Early Head Start Advisory Team to inform the ongoing activities and initiatives of the HSSCO</li> </ul>	All	All	All
Develop mechanisms for obtaining ongoing feedback from external partners regarding the effectiveness of the HSSCO and how the HSSCO can most effectively integrate its efforts with those of the early learning field	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct regular surveys to assess the effectiveness of the HSSCO with external partners and use the feedback to continually inform the direction of the grant</li> </ul>	All	All	All
Continue to maintain partnerships that serve to advance initiatives and activities specific to the needs of American Indian/Alaska Native and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop ongoing, regular opportunities to communicate with the AIAN and M/S Head Start Collaboration Directors on issues impacting their programs in Washington</li> </ul>	All	All	All

Objective	Strategy	HSSCO Mandated Goal Area(s)	HSSCO Priority Area(s)	ECCS/Kids Matter Domain Area(s)
Migrant/Seasonal Head Start programs in Washington State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to share and exchange data and information regarding AI/AN and M/S Head Start programs with the Region 11 and 12 Collaboration Directors</li> <li>Continue to partner with the Region 11 and 12 Collaboration Directors in conducting the annual needs assessment of AI/AN and M/S Head Start programs</li> </ul>			
Ensure Head Start/Early Head Start's participation in the Department of Early Learning's Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Serve as a liaison to Head Start/Early Head Start programs and the Early Learning Advisory Council to ensure Head Start/Early Head Start involvement and voice on the council</li> </ul>	All	All	All

**APPENDIX A:**  
**HSSCO Strategic Planning Advisory Team Members**

**Janet Anderson**

Olympic Community Action Program

**Pat Brinkman**

RX T/TA State-Based System

**Janice Deguchi**

Denise Louie Head Start

**Cathy Garland**

Children's Home Society of Washington

**Lynn Harlington**

Enterprise for Progress in the Community (EPIC)

**Debi Hood**

Lewis County Head Start

**John Naegele**

Children's Home Society of Washington

**Joel Ryan**

Washington State Association of Head Start and ECEAP

**Dee Wetzel**

Migrant/Seasonal Head Start Collaboration Office

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**Jennifer Jennings-Shaffer**

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**APPENDIX B:**  
**HSSCO Needs Assessment: State of Washington 2008-09 Survey Results**

# Head Start State Collaboration Office Needs Assessment

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*State of Washington  
2008-2009 Survey Results*



June 2009

## Introduction

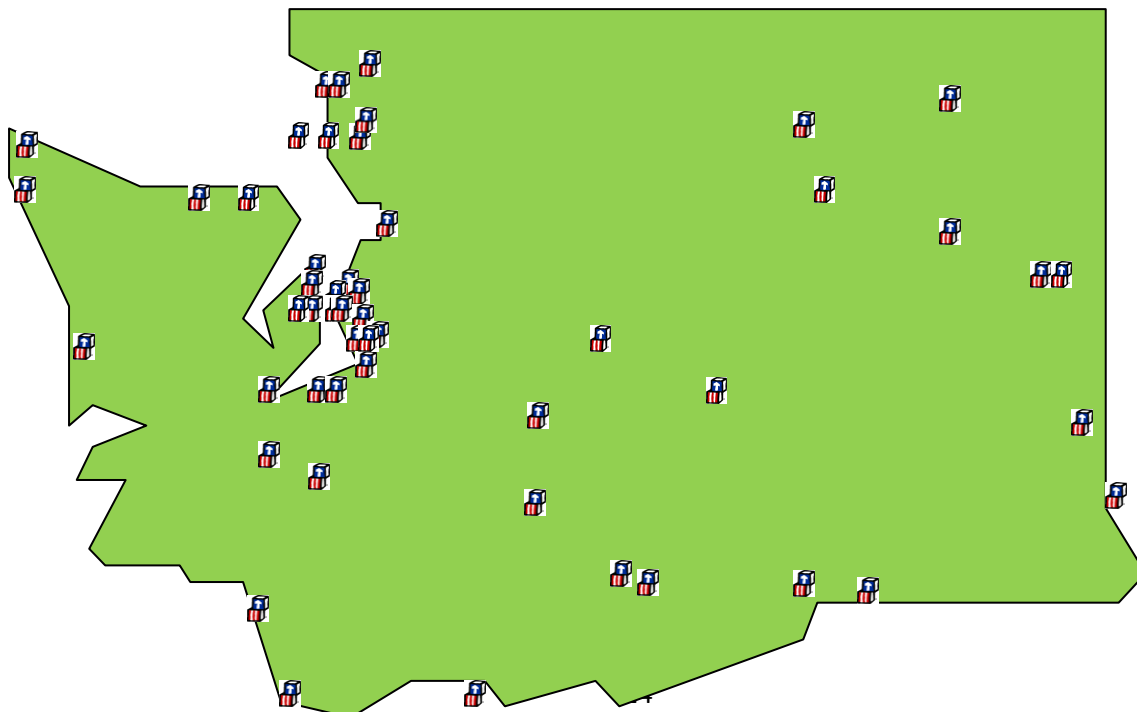
Head Start is a national program that directs comprehensive child development services to help children from low-income families become ready for school. Eligible children ages birth to 5 and pregnant women and their families receive assistance and information in the areas of education and early childhood development; medical, dental, and mental health; disabilities; nutrition; and parent involvement.

The federal Office of Head Start in the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) provides funding for grants to local public agencies, private organizations, Indian tribes, and school systems. These organizations, in turn, operate Head Start programs.

### Head Start in Washington State

In Washington, there are four different Head Start program options that meet the diverse needs of children and families in our state: Head Start, Early Head Start, Migrant/Seasonal Head Start, and American Indian/Alaska Native Head Start. The programs are geographically located throughout the state, in both rural and urban settings.

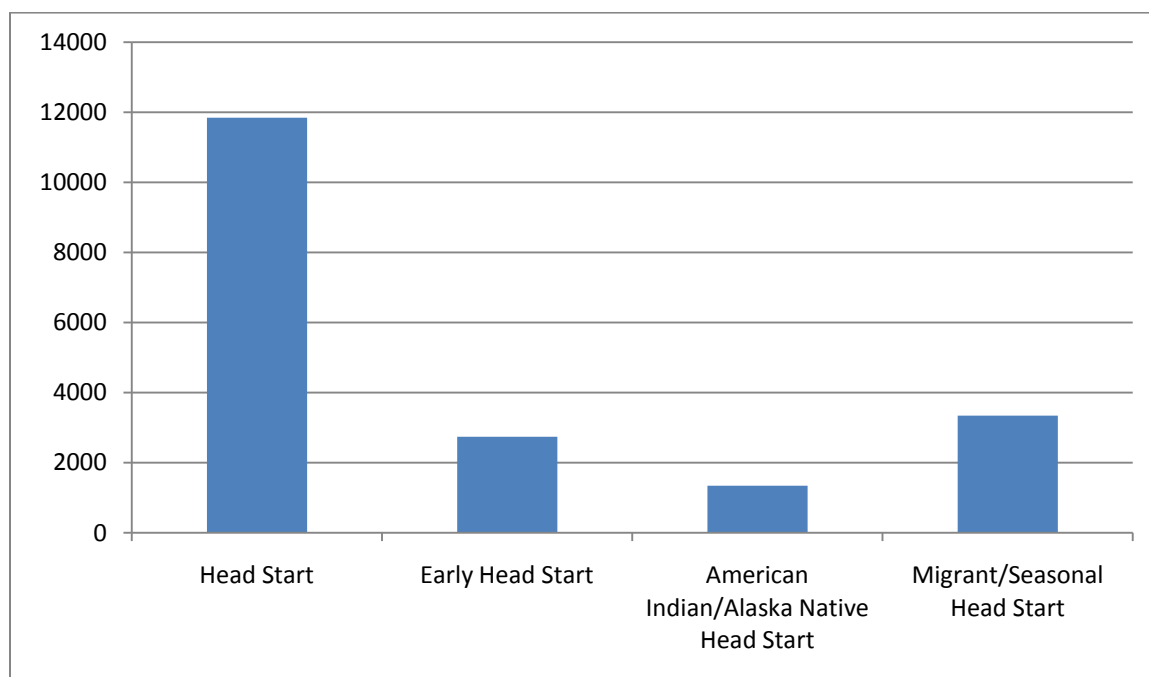
Figure 1. Locations of Washington Head Start Programs





In the 2007/2008 year a total of 19,250 children and families were served through 28 Head Start programs, 20 Early Head Start programs, 17 American Indian/Alaska Native Head Start programs, and 2 Migrant/Season Head Start programs in Washington.

Figure 2. Children/Families Served by Program Type



### Head Start State Collaboration Office (HSSCO)

The HSSCO in Washington is the main point of contact for Head Start at the State level. It is housed within the Washington State Department of Early Learning (DEL). The HSSCO was established to serve as a state-level support mechanism for the various efforts of Head Start programs to provide quality, comprehensive services to children, families, and their communities. Specifically, the HSSCO is charged with the following three federally-mandated goal areas in its efforts to provide state-level support to programs and all low-income children and families:

- *Help build early childhood systems and enhance access to comprehensive services and support for Head Start programs and all low-income children and families;*

- *Encourage widespread collaboration between Head Start and other appropriate programs, services, and initiatives, augmenting Head Start's capacity to be a partner in State initiatives on behalf of children and their families; and*
- *Facilitate the involvement of Head Start in state policies, plans, processes and decisions affecting Head Start target populations and other low-income families.*

In addition, the HSSCO must focus its efforts on nine (9) HSSCO priority areas that include: ***Health Services; Children and Families Experiencing Homelessness; Family/Child Assistance; Child Care; Family Literacy; Children with Disabilities; Community Services; Education (Publicly-funded Pre-K Partnership Development and Head Start Transition and Alignment with K-12); and Professional Development.***

## Needs Assessment Survey

The Head Start Act of 2007 requires that each HSSCO conduct a statewide needs assessment of Head Start programs. The results of the assessment in each state are intended to inform the development of a 5-year strategic plan for the HSSCO which must be updated annually.

### Survey Objectives

The Washington HSSCO in DEL released a needs assessment survey in October 2008. The purpose of the survey was to identify the challenges and strengths of Head Start programs in Washington with regard to collaboration, coordination, and alignment of services. The survey was structured around the 9 HSSCO priority areas.

A separate survey was released to partner organizations within the larger early learning community including educational institutions, state agencies, and non-profits. This survey served to solicit broad stakeholder feedback around the priorities and effectiveness of the HSSCO in Washington.

### Survey Design

Due to the Governor's state spending freeze on personal services contracts announced in August 2008, the HSSCO was unable to expend federal funds specifically allocated to engage a contractor to facilitate the needs assessment process; therefore, internal resources and expertise were sought to support activities necessary to execute the work. The needs assessment was released in Survey Monkey format in October of 2008. Head Start program directors were each sent a web address for the survey and encouraged to include relevant staff members in its completion. Participation in the survey process was voluntary, however programs were encouraged by the Office of Head Start to respond.

Each of the 9 areas of focus included 3 types of questions:

- Part 1 of each area asked programs to rate their involvement with various service providers and organizations. Participants used a four-point scale and definitions to reflect their progress in relationship building.

<b>No Working Relationship</b> (little/no contact)	<b>Cooperation</b> (exchange info/referrals)	<b>Coordination</b> (work together)	<b>Collaboration</b> (share resources/agreements)
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- Part 2 of each area asked programs to rate the level of difficulty they had with a variety of activities and partnerships, such as sharing data and information with agencies or creating and implementing transition policies with local school districts. The purpose was to identify challenges programs may be experiencing in building successful partnerships at the local and state levels. Programs rated the difficulty on a four-point scale ranging from “Not At All Difficult” to “Extremely Difficult.”

<b>Not At All Difficult</b>	<b>Somewhat Difficult</b>	<b>Difficult</b>	<b>Extremely Difficult</b>
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- Part 3 of each area included open-ended questions at the end of each of the nine sections of the survey. These questions asked for feedback on other issues including problems, successes, and unique challenges facing American Indian/Alaska Native and Migrant/Seasonal Head Start programs.

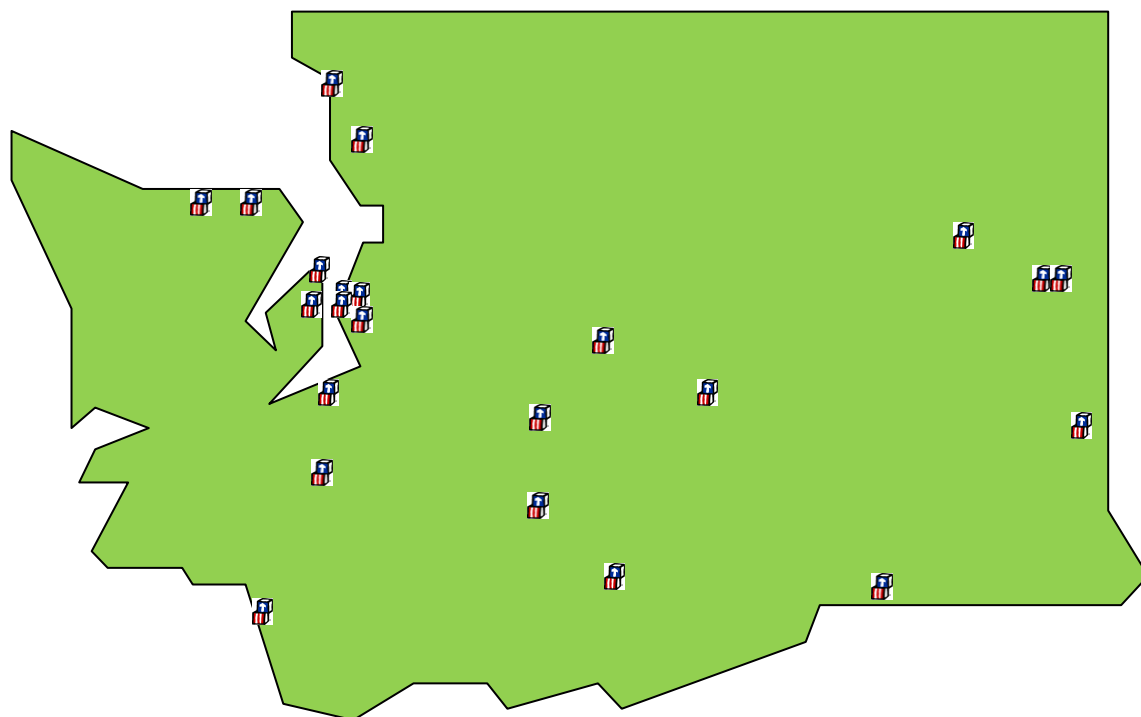
### Response rate

The survey was released to all Washington programs, including Head Start, Early Head Start, Migrant/Seasonal Head Start, and American Indian/Alaska Native Head Start. Programs had until December 2008 to complete survey. The HSSCO in DEL granted an extension through January to programs who did not respond by December. In total, we received 23 completed surveys out of the total 49 eligible programs. The charts below show responses by program type and geographical location.

Figure 3. Responses by Program Type

Program Respondents	Percentage
Head Start	95.8%
Early Head Start	54.2%
Migrant/Seasonal Head Start	4.2%
American Indian/Alaska Native	4.2%
Child Care Partnership Option	20.8%

Figure 4. Respondent Locations



## Survey Results

After receiving the completed surveys, we analyzed results and compiled summaries to inform the strategic plan. Below are highlights from the survey, to include an overall summary of strengths, as well as an outline of the challenges identified for each of the nine (9) priority areas. Full survey results can be viewed in Appendix A at the end of this report.

### Summary of Strengths

It is important to emphasize that the following summary represents a “snapshot” view of strengths identified through the needs assessment survey, and does not represent the wide-range of strengths that programs possess with regard to collaboration and coordination in the nine priority areas.

- Partnering with oral health professionals on oral health-related issues
- Partnerships and collaboration with medical/dental community
- Multiple resources/grants available to access in supporting family/child literacy activities
- Partnerships with school districts to prepare transition plans and align curriculum/assessment

- Programs who operate Head Start and ECEAP (dually funded) report strong partnerships with DEL and school districts
- Most programs have strong partnerships with two-year higher education institutions
- Programs report strong partnerships with law enforcement agencies and child abuse/neglect service agencies
- Programs report high levels of coordination and collaboration with the Department of Social and Health Services

## **Summary of Challenges**

### **Health Care**

Survey questions about health care assessed the programs' relationships with members of the health community, including medical, mental health and dental providers, as well as local agencies and community resources. Some challenges emerged, including:

- Assisting parents to effectively communicate with medical and dental providers
- Helping families with transportation
- Getting full representation on the Health Services Advisory Committee (HSAC)
- Families not following through with appointments
- Limited mental health services
- Lack of medical and dental coverage for parents in the families

The majority of programs found it "not at all difficult" to link children to dental and medical homes and to partner with medical professionals on health-related issues. Other strong partnerships included those with public health services and local agencies providing mental health prevention and treatment.

### **Children and Families Experiencing Homelessness**

In the survey, programs were asked to assess their relationships with community partners as well as their own policies, procedures, and data collection related to families experiencing homelessness. Some barriers included:

- A number of programs reporting "no working relationship" with the local McKinney-Vento liaison
- Difficulty obtaining sufficient data on the needs of homeless children and families
- Difficulty developing family outreach, supports, and transition planning with the local school districts

Most programs reported cooperative relationships with local housing agencies, planning groups and agencies serving homeless families. Programs reported it was not difficult to implement policies and procedures that ensure homeless children are prioritized for enrollment.

### **Family and Child Assistance Needs**

This section examined the variety of social services that a Head Start program may help a family to access, including child care subsidies, food stamps, and/or employment assistance. Many programs noted “no working relationship” with the Council for Children and Families (formerly Washington Council for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect/WCPCAN) and networks supporting children of incarcerated parents.

Programs reported stronger relationships with the Department of Social and Health Services—both the Community Services Division that helps families with food stamps, Medicaid, child care subsidies and other assistance; and the Children’s Administration that includes networks supporting foster and adoptive families. There were also good partnerships with DEL, the Community Task Force on Substance Abuse and community resource guides and hotlines. However, several programs did note struggles with eligibility and continuity of child care subsidies; the need for more support of foster care families; and access to mental health services.

### **Child Care**

For many Head Start families, it is necessary to find safe, healthy and affordable child care. In the survey, Head Start programs reported it was “somewhat difficult” or “difficult” to:

- Align practices and policies with service providers
- Establish partnerships with child care providers
- Assist families in accessing full-day, full-year services
- Support families in accessing child care subsidies

Additional child care issues were noted in the written responses from programs, including:

- Subsidy maintenance and continuity
- Limited care for infants and toddlers
- Access to quality care

In reference to quality care, programs noted a lack of availability and choice, limited options in rural areas, language barriers, and the high cost of child care. Head Start programs did report access to resources related to child care, including child care resource & referral agencies.

### **Family Literacy Services**

Head Start programs reported having relationships with many community programs to help families improve literacy. These included:

- Public/private sources providing donations or funding for books
- Services to promote parent/child literacy interactions
- Parent education programs/services

It can be difficult, programs reported, to recruit families into family literacy services because of lack of access in rural communities, the time commitment, and other issues. Head Start programs indicated that they continue to address illiteracy by applying for grants and funding; partnering with schools; and accessing programs such as National Head Start Family Literacy Center, United Way's Readers, and Raising a Reader.

### **Children with Disabilities**

In assisting children with disabilities, Head Start programs reported several areas that needed improvement. Responses included that it could be "extremely difficult" to secure services for children in the summer months and "somewhat difficult" or "difficult" to obtain timely evaluations of children.

Most programs reported strong relationships with local school districts in helping children with disabilities, and they had little difficulty with their staff attending meetings to discuss a child's educational plan or sharing data with other service providers. Issues can arise, however, when there are language barriers with families, and with the length, wording and difficulty of the process to create specific plans for a child's needs—Individual Family Service Plans (IFSP) and Individual Education Plans (IEP). Narrative responses included a lack of access to some resources, such as physical therapy.

### **Community Services**

Creating partnerships with private resources such as foundations and business can be "somewhat difficult," Head Start programs said in the survey. A number of programs, however, said they have been successful working with law enforcement agencies and providers of child abuse prevention/treatment services. Other successful links have been forged with Community Task Forces and Interagency Children's Councils, and through community meetings.

### **Education: Pre-K**

In survey questions about education and pre-k partnerships, most Head Start programs reported they had little trouble connecting with communities and related resources. Most found it easy to hold parent outreach activities. They drew positive attention to partnerships with school districts around training and community collaboration toward kindergarten readiness.

There were several areas, however, where programs felt improvement was needed. These included:

- Program technical assistance
- Alignment of educational activities, curricular objectives, and instruction
- School district relationships (primarily around disabilities services)
- Transition plans among school districts

### **Education: Transitions**

As children transition into kindergarten, partnerships with the local school districts become more even more important. While a majority of Head Start programs reported working collaboratively with school districts around transitions, they indicated that more work needs to be done around aligning curricula and assessment practices. More coordination of other support services for children and families is also needed, programs reported. Comments about positive work included development of transition teams and kindergarten packets as well as school district staff participating in Head Start program events.

### **Professional Development**

A shortage of time and money was the theme in the survey responses regarding professional development. Almost 70 percent of programs reported difficulty accessing financial support for professional development activities, and 80 percent struggled to find staff release time to attend activities. Most programs reported collaborative relationships with institutions of higher education and technical and community colleges. Most programs reported easy access to early childhood degree programs in the community, a minority reported limited options.

## **Conclusions and Next Steps**

The HSSCO shared the results of both the needs assessment survey and the survey sent to external partners with an advisory team composed of Head Start directors from across the state and worked with this group to distill priorities and practical strategies from the data. The conclusions of this work form the basis of the HSSCO's new strategic plan which is organized into 5 broad goal areas:

- **Goal #1: Increase the availability of appropriate and coordinated health services for children and families**
- **Goal #2: Improved ability of families to obtain quality early learning programs and services that meet their needs**
- **Goal #3: Improve/increase opportunities for Head Start/Early Head Start programs to be involved in state-level activities, initiatives and programs that enhance services to children and families**
- **Goal #4: Contribute to the development of a coordinated, statewide comprehensive professional development system for all early learning professionals in Washington State**
- **Goal #5: Improve the governance, functional operations, and perceptions of the HSSCO to be a transparent and inclusive leader in supporting policies and initiatives that further advance services to children and families**

The Strategic plan will guide the work of the HSSCO in the coming 5 years with updates annually based on the changing needs of Head Start programs within the ever-changing landscape of early learning in Washington State.